

# The Chalice of Courage

Being the Story of Certain Persons Who Drank of it and Conquered

## A Romance of Colorado

By Cyrus Townsend Brady

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Illustrations by Elsworth Young

She was a perfectly formed woman on the ancient noble lines of Miss rather than the degenerate softness of Medici. She grew stronger of limb and fuller of breath, quicker and steadier of eye and hand, cooler of nerve, in these demanding, compelling adventures among the rocks in this mountain air. She was not a tall woman, indeed slightly under rather than over the medium size, but she was so perfectly proportioned, she carried herself with the fearlessness of a young champion, that she looked taller than she was. There was not an ounce of superfluous flesh upon her, yet she had the grace of Hebe, the strength of Pallas Athene, and the swiftness of motion of Atalanta. Had she but carried bow and spear, had she worn tunic and sandals, she might have stood for Diana and she would have had no cause to blush by comparison with the finest model of Praxiteles' chisel or the most splendid and glowing example of Apelles' brush.

Uncle Robert was delighted with her; his contribution to her western outfit was a small Winchester. She displayed astonishing aptitude under his instructions and soon became wonderfully proficient with that deadly weapon and with a revolver also. There was little danger to be apprehended in the daytime among the mountains, the more experienced men thought, still it was wise for the girl always to have a weapon in readiness, so in her journeyings, either the Winchester was slung from her shoulder or carried in her hand, or else the Colt dangled at her hip. At first she took both, but finally it was with reluctance that she could be persuaded to take either. Nothing had ever happened. Save for a few birds now and then she had seemed the only tenant of the wilderness of her choice.

One night after a camping experience of nearly two weeks in the mountains and just before the time for breaking up and going back to civilization, she announced that early the next morning she was going down the canon for a day's fishing excursion.

None of the party had ever followed the little river very far, but it was known that some ten miles below the stream merged in a lovely gem-like lake in a sort of crater in the mountains. From thence by a series of water falls it descended through the foothills to the distant plains beyond. The others had arranged to climb one especially dangerous and ambitious provoking peak which towered above them and which had never before been surmounted so far as they knew. Enid enjoyed mountain climbing. She liked the uplift in feeling that came from going higher and higher till some crest was gained, but on this occasion they urged her to accompany them in vain.

When the fixity of her decision was established she had a number of offers to accompany her, but declined them all, bidding the others go their way. Mrs. Maitland, who was not feeling very well, old Kirby, who had climbed too many mountains to feel much interest in that game, and Pete the horse wrangler, who had to look after the stock, remained in camp; the others were in exception of Enid started at daybreak for their long ascent. She waited until the sun was about an hour high and then bade good-bye to the three and began the descent of the canon. Traveling light, for she was going far—farther, indeed, than she knew—she left her Winchester at home, but carried the revolver with the fishing tackle and substantial luncheon.

Now the river—a river by courtesy only—and the canon turned sharply back on themselves just beyond the little meadow where the camp was pitched. Past the tents that had been their home for this joyous period the river ran due east for a few hundred feet, after which it curved sharply, doubled back and flowed westward for several miles before it gradually swung around to the east on its proper course again.

It had been Enid's purpose to cut across the hills and strike the river where it turned eastward once more, avoiding the long detour back. In fact, she had declared her intention of doing that to Kirby and he had given her careful directions so that she should not get lost in the mountains.

But she had plenty of time and no excuse or reason for saving it, she never tired of the charm of the canon; therefore, instead of plunging directly over the spur of the range, she followed the familiar trail and after she had passed westward far beyond the limits of the camp to the turning, she decided, in accordance with that utterly irresponsible thing, a woman's will, that she would not go down the canon that day after all, but that she would cross back over the range and strike the river a few miles above the camp and go up the canon.

She had been up in that direction a few times, but only for a short distance, as the ascent above the camp

was very sharp, in fact for a mile more than a mile the brook was only a succession of water falls; the best fishing was below the camp and the finest woods were deeper in the canon. She suddenly concluded that she would like to see what was up in that unexplored section of the country and so, with scarcely a momentary hesitation, she abandoned her former plan and began the ascent of the range.

Upon decisions so lightly taken what momentous consequences depend? Whether she should go up the stream or down the stream, whether she should follow the rivulet to its source or descend it to its mouth, was apparently a matter of little moment, yet her whole life turned absolutely upon that decision. The idle and unconsidered choice of the hour was fraught with gravest possibilities. Had that election been made with any suspicion, with any foreknowledge, had it come as the result of careful reasoning or farseeing of probabilities, it might have been understandable, but an impulse, a whim, the vagrant idea of an idle hour, the careless chance of a moment, and behold! a life is changed. On one side were youth and innocence, freedom and happiness, a happy day, a good rest by the cheerful fire at night, on the other, peril of life, struggle, love, jealousy, self sacrifice, devotion, suffering, knowledge—scarcely Eve herself when she stood apple in hand with ignorance and pleasure around her and enlightenment and sorrow before her, had greater choice to make.

How fortunate are we that the future is veiled, that the psalmist's prayer that he might know his end and be certified how long he had to live is one that will not and cannot be granted; that it has been given to but one to foresee his own future, for no power apparently could enable us to stand up against what might be, because we are only human beings not sufficiently alight with the spark divine. We wait for the end because we must, but thank God we know it not until it comes.

Nothing of this appeared to the girl that bright sunny morning. Fate hid in those mountains under the guise of fancy. Lighthearted, carefree, flitted with buoyant joy over every foot of life, she left the flowing water and scaled the cliff beyond which in the wilderness she was to find after all, the world.

The ascent was longer and more difficult and dangerous than she had imagined when she first confronted it, perhaps it was typical and foretold her progress. More than once she had to stop and carefully examine the face of the canon wall for a practicable trail; more than once she had to exercise extreme care in her climb, but she was a bold and fearless mountaineer by this time and at last surmounting every difficulty she stood panting slightly, a little tired, but triumphant upon the summit.

The ground was rocky and broken, the timber line was close above her and she judged that she must be several miles from the camp. The canon was very crooked, she could see only a few hundred yards of it in any direction. She scanned her circumscribed limited horizon eagerly for the smoke from the great fire that they always kept burning in the camp, but not a sign of it was visible. She was evidently a thousand feet above the river whence she had come. Her standing ground was a rocky ridge which fell away more gently on the other side for perhaps two hundred feet toward the same brook. She could see through vistas in the trees the upturned peaks of the main range, bare, chaotic, snow crowned, lonely, majestic, terrible.

The awe of the everlasting hills is greater than that of heaving seas. Save in the infrequent periods of calm, the latter always moves; the mountains are the same for all time. The ocean is quick, noisy, living; the mountains are calm, still—dead!

The girl stood as it were on the roof of the world, a solitary human being, so far as she knew, in the eye of God above her. Ah, but the eyes divine look long and see far; things beyond the human ken are all revealed. None of the party had ever come this far from the camp in this direction she knew. And she was glad to be the first, as she fatuously believed, to observe that majestic solitude.

Surveying the great range she wondered where the peak climbers might be. Keen sighted though she was, she could not discover them. The crest that they were attempting lay in another direction hidden by a nearer spur. She was in the very heart of the mountains; peaks and ridges rose all about her so much so that the general direction of the great range was lost. She was at the center of a far flung covey of crest and range. She marked one towering point to the right of her that rose massively grand above all the others. Tomorrow she would climb to that high point and from its

lofty elevations look upon the heavens above and the earth beneath, eye and the waters under the earth far below. Tomorrow!—It is generally known that we do not usually attempt the high points in life's range at once, content are we with lower altitudes today.

There was no sound above her; the rushing water over the rocks upon the nearer side she could hear faintly; there was no wind about her to stir the long needles of the pines. It was very still, the kind of a stillness of body which is the outward and visible complement of that stillness of the soul in which men know God. There had been no earthquake, no storm, the mountains had not heaved beneath her feet, the great and strong wind had not passed by, the rocks had not been rent and broken, yet Enid caught herself listening as if for a voice. The thrill of majesty, silence, loneliness was upon her. She stood—one stands when there is a chance of meeting God on the way, one does not kneel until he comes—with her raised hands clasped, her head uplifted in exultation unspeakable, God-conquered with her face to heaven upturned.

"I will lift up mine eyes to the hills whence cometh my salvation," her heart sang voicelessly. "We praise thee, oh, God, we magnify thy holy name forever," floated through her brain, in great appreciation of the marvelous work of the Almighty shap-



The Girl Stood as It Were on the Roof of the World.

ing master hand. Caught up as it were into the heavens, her soul leaped to meet its maker. Thinking to find God she waited there on the heaven kissing hill.

How long she stayed she did not realize; she took no note of time; it did not occur to her even to look at the watch on her wrist, she had swept the skyline out off as it were by the peaks when first she came, and when at last she turned away—even divest moments must have an end—she looked not backward. She saw not a little cloud hid on the horizon behind the rampart of the ages, as it were, no bigger than a man's hand, a cloud full of portent and which would alarm greatly the veteran Kirby in the camp and Maitland on the mountain top. Both of them unfortunately were unable to see it, one being on the other side of the range, and the other deep in the canon, and for both of them as for the girl the sun still shone brightly.

The declivity to the river on the upper side was comparatively easy and Enid Maitland went slowly and thoughtfully down to it until she reached the young torrent. She got her tackle ready, but did not casting, as she made her way slowly up the ever narrowing, ever rising canon. She was charmed and thrilled by the wild beauty of the way, the spell of the mountains was deep upon her. Thoughtfully she wandered on until presently she came to another little amphitheater like that where the camp was pitched, only smaller. Strange to say, the brook or river here broadened in a little pool perhaps twenty feet across; a turn had thrown a full force of water against the huge boulder wall and in ages of effort a giant cup had been hollowed out of the native rock. The pool was perhaps four or five feet deep, the rocky bottom worn smooth. The clearing was upon the opposite side and the banks were heavily wooded beyond the spur of the rock which formed the back of the pool. She could see the trout in it. She made ready to try her fortune, but before she did so an idea came to her—daring, unconventional, extraordinary, begot of innocence and inexperience.

The water of course was very cold, but she had been accustomed all her life to taking a bath at the natural temperature of the water at whatever season. She knew that the only people in that wilderness were the members of her own party, three of them were at the camp below; the others were ascending a mountain miles away. The canon was deep sunk, and she satisfied herself by careful observation that the pool was not overlooked by any elevations far or near.

Her abutions in common with those of the rest of the campers had been by piecemeal of necessity. Here was an opportunity for a plunge in a natural bath tub. She was as certain that she would be under no observation as if she were in the privacy of her own chamber. Here again impulse determined the end. In spite of her assurance there was some little apprehension in the glance that she cast about her, but it soon vanished. There was no one. She was absolutely alone. The pool and the chance of the plunge had brought her down to earth again; the thought of the ennobling exhilaration of the pure cold

water dashing against her own sweet warm young body changed the current of her thoughts—the anticipation of it rather.

Impulsively she dropped her rod upon the grass, unpinning her hat, threw the fishing basket from her shoulder. She was wearing a stout sweater; that, too, joined the rest. Nervous hands manipulated buttons and the fastenings. In a few moments the sweet figure of youth, of beauty, of purity and of innocence brightened the sod and shed a white luster upon the green of the grass and moss and pines, reflecting light to the gray brown rocks of the range. So Eve may have looked on some bright Eden morning. A few steps forward and this nymph of the woods, this naiad of the mountains, plunged into the clear, cold waters of the pool—a water sprite and her fountain!

### CHAPTER V.

#### The Bear, the Man and the Flood.

The water was deep enough to receive her dive and the pool was long enough to enable her to swim a few strokes. The first chill of the icy water was soon lost in the vigorous motions in which she indulged, but no more human form, however hardy and inured, could long endure that frigid bath. Reluctantly, yet with the knowledge that she must go, after one more sweeping dive and a few magnificent strokes, she raised her head from the water lapping her white shoulders and shaking her face clear from the drops of crystal, faced the shore. It was no longer untenanted, she was no longer alone.

What she saw startled and alarmed her beyond measure. Planted on her clothes, looking straight at her, having come upon her in absolute silence, nothing having given her the least warning of his approach, and now gazing at her with red, hungry, evil, vicious eyes, the eyes of the covetous filled with the cruel lust of desire and carnal possession, and yet with a glint of surprise in them, too, as if he did not know quite what to make of the white loveliness of this unwonted apparition flashing so suddenly at him out of the water, this strange invader of the domain of which he was sole master and lord paramount, stood a great, monstrous, frightful looking grizzly bear, Ursus Horribilis, indeed.

He was an aged monarch of the mountains, reddish brown in color originally, but now a hoary dirty gray. His body was massive and burly, his legs short, dark colored and immensely powerful. His broad square head moved restlessly. His fanged mouth opened and a low hoarse growl came from the red cavern of his throat. He was an old and terrible monster who had tasted the blood of man and who would not hesitate to attack without provocation, especially anything at once so harmless and so whitely inviting as the girl in the pool.

The girl forgot the chill of the water in the horror of that moment. Alone, naked, defenseless, lost in the mountains, with the most powerful, sanguinary and ferocious beast of the continent in front of her, she could neither fight nor fly; she could only wait his pleasure. He snuffed at her clothing a moment and stood with one fore foot advanced for a second or two growing deeply, evidently, she thought with almost superhuman keenness of perception, preparing to leap into the pool and seize upon her.

The rush of the current as it swirled about her caused her to sway gently, otherwise she stood motionless and apprehensive, awfully expectant. She had made no sound, and save for that low growl the great beast had been equally silent. There was an awful fixity in the gaze she turned upon him and he wavered under it. It annoyed him. It bespoke a little of the dominance of the human. But she was too surprised, too unnerved, too desperately frightened to put forth the full power of mind over matter. There was piteous appeal in her gaze. The bear realized this and mastered her sufficiently.

She did not know whether she was in the water or in the air; there were but two points upon which her consciousness was focussed in the vast ellipse of her imagination. Another moment or two and all coherency of thought would be gone. The grizzly still unsettled and uneasy before her awful glance, but not deterred by it, turned its great head sideways a little to escape the direct immobile stare brought his sharp clawed foot down heavily and lurched forward.

Scarcely had a minute elapsed in which all this happened. That huge threatening heave of the great body toward her relieved the tension. She found voice at last. Although it was absolutely futile, she realized as she cried, her released lips framed the loud appeal.

"Help! for God's sake."

Although she knew she cried but to the bleak walls of the canon, the drooping pines, the rushing river, the distant heaven, the appeal went forth accompanied by the mightiest conjuration known to man.

"For God's sake, help!"

How dare poor humanity so plead, the doubter cries. What is it to God if one suffers, another bleeds, another dies? What answer could come out of that silent sky? Sometimes the Lord answers with the loud voice of men's fashioning, instead of in that still whisper which is his own, and the sound of which we fail to catch because of our own ignoble babble.

The answer to her prayer came with a roar in her nervous frightened ear like a clap of thunder. Ere the first echo of it died away, it was succeeded by another and another and another, echoing, rolling, reverberating among the rocks in ever diminishing but long drawn out scale.

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